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## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT RECORD

NUMBER: CO-KRFO-00-02 EA

CASEFILE/PROJECT NUMBER: COC-63081

PROJECT NAME: Kremmling Resource Management Plan Amendment - Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area

### LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

A. The proposed planning amendment would affect the following described BLM administered public lands:

T. 1 N., R. 79 W.,  
Sec. 8, S $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
Sec. 17, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , N $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
Sec. 18, lot 3.

T. 1 N., R. 80 W.,  
Sec. 13, lots 1 thru 4, inclusive;  
Sec. 14, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$  and a reconveyed parcel of land in the S $\frac{1}{2}$ S $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
Sec. 15, lots 9 and 11, S $\frac{1}{2}$ S $\frac{1}{2}$  and a reconveyed parcel of land in the N $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
Sec. 16, a reconveyed parcel of land in the S $\frac{1}{2}$ S $\frac{1}{2}$ ;  
Sec. 19, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , and a reconveyed parcel in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$  and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
Sec. 20, lots 2 and 3, S $\frac{1}{2}$ N $\frac{1}{2}$ , and NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
Sec. 21, N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , S $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$  and reconveyed parcel in the N $\frac{1}{2}$ N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
Sec. 22, lots 1 thru 4, inclusive.

T. 1 N., R. 81 W.,  
Sec. 13, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
Sec. 23, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , and NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
Sec. 24, S $\frac{1}{2}$ N $\frac{1}{2}$  and N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
Sec. 27, N $\frac{1}{2}$ , SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
Sec. 28, SE $\frac{1}{4}$  and SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
Sec. 32, E $\frac{1}{2}$  and SW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
Sec. 33, N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , and W $\frac{1}{2}$ .

T. 1 S., R. 81 W.,  
Sec. 5, lots 8 and 9;  
Sec. 6, lots 6, 7, 9 thru 18, inclusive;  
Sec. 7, lots 5 thru 19, inclusive;  
Sec. 18, lots 1 and 2, and E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ .

T. 1 S., R. 82 W.,

Sec. 12, lots 1 thru 5, inclusive, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , and W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;

Sec. 13, lots 1 thru 9, inclusive, W $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  and that portion of Tract 53 lying westerly of the centerline of the of the Colorado River;

Sec. 14, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , E $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , and SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;

Sec. 22, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;

Sec. 23, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , N $\frac{1}{2}$ S $\frac{1}{2}$ , and S $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;

Sec. 24, lots 1, 2, and 3, and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , and S $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;

Sec. 27, W $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , and parcels of reconveyed land in the W $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$  and E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;

Sec. 28, lots 4 thru 6, inclusive, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , and SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;

Sec. 32, lots 1, 3, 4, 5, and 8, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , those portions of unpatented Mineral Survey No. 13963 lying within the E $\frac{1}{2}$  of Section 32, and that portion of Tract 82 within the E $\frac{1}{2}$  of Section 32, all exclusive of patented lands;

Sec. 33, lots 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 thru 11, inclusive, and NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , and including the Bona Dea Placer;

Sec. 34, lot 1 and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ .

T. 2 S., R. 82 W.,

Sec. 4, lots 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 26 thru 30, inclusive, S $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , and Bona Dea Placer;

Sec. 5, lots 5, 6, 11, 14 thru 23, inclusive, 25 and 26, S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , and N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;

Sec. 6, Lots 20, 30, 31, 32, 37, and 38, S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$  and SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;

Sec. 7, lots 5, 6, 7, and 11 thru 21, inclusive, and NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , and SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;

Sec. 18, Lots 5 thru 12, inclusive, 14 thru 17, inclusive.

T. 2 S., R. 83 W.,

Sec. 12, lot 4;

Sec. 13, lots 1 thru 4, inclusive, W $\frac{1}{2}$ E $\frac{1}{2}$ , and E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;

Sec. 23, E $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , S $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , and N $\frac{1}{2}$ S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;

Sec. 24, lot 1, W $\frac{1}{2}$ E $\frac{1}{2}$ , and W $\frac{1}{2}$ ;

Sec. 25, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;

Sec. 26, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , S $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ .

The public lands included in this proposed planning amendment area total approximately 12,237 acres in Grand and Eagle counties. The above described lands would be subject to all the management prescriptions described in the proposed action. This entails including all the lands in the Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), establishing land use priorities for the lands, establishing the area as No Surface Occupancy (NSO) for oil and gas leasing, and withdrawing the lands from settlement, sale, location, or entry under the general land laws, including the mining laws.

B. In addition, the proposed action would also apply to Federal mineral estate with privately owned or State of Colorado owned surface estate. The following described lands involving

Federal minerals and Non-Federal surface estate would be established as NSO for oil and gas leasing, and would be withdrawn from settlement, sale, location, or entry under the general land laws, including the mining laws. The other proposed management prescriptions included in the proposed planning amendment (inclusion in the SRMA and establishing land use priorities) would not affect this private or State owned surface estate:

T. 1 N., R. 80 W.,  
Sec. 20, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ :

T. 1 N., R. 81 W.,  
Sec. 28, N $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  and SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ :  
Sec. 29, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ .

T. 1 S., R. 82 W.,  
Sec. 14, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ :  
Sec. 22, N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$  and SW $\frac{1}{4}$ :  
Sec. 23, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ :  
Sec. 26, lot 1, and SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ :  
Sec. 27, lots 1 and 2, inclusive, and N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ :  
Sec. 33, that portion of Tract 70 lying within the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ .

T. 2 S., R. 82 W.,  
Sec. 4, lot 22:  
Sec. 7, that portion of Tract 41 lying within Section 7.

The privately owned or State of Colorado owned lands with Federal mineral estate that would be affected by the proposed planning amendment, involve approximately 1,020 acres in Grand and Eagle counties.

C. The proposed planning amendment would also identify the following privately owned lands as NSO for oil and gas leasing, and as withdrawn from settlement, sale, location, or entry under the general land laws, including the mining laws, if the lands were ever acquired by the Federal government. There would be no affect on the lands at this time, nor would the proposed planning amendment have any effect on private property rights. If the lands were ever acquired by the Federal government through sale or exchange, they would automatically come under the umbrella of the NSO and the lands/minerals withdrawal associated with the proposed action. The other management prescriptions included in the proposed action (inclusion in the SRMA and establishing land use priorities) would not affect these lands. The inclusion of the lands in the SRMA or the establishing of land use priorities would be considered in environmental documents prepared for the acquisition action.

T. 1 N., R. 79 W.,  
Sec. 7, lot 4, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , and S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ :  
Sec. 18, lots 1 and 2, and NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , and N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ .

T. 1 N., R. 80 W.,  
Sec. 12, S $\frac{1}{2}$ S $\frac{1}{2}$ :

Sec. 13, N $\frac{1}{2}$  and SW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
 Sec. 14, N $\frac{1}{2}$ , N $\frac{1}{2}$ S $\frac{1}{2}$ , N $\frac{1}{2}$ S $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , and SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
 Sec. 15, lots 8 and 10, S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , and N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
 Sec. 16, N $\frac{1}{2}$ S $\frac{1}{2}$  exclusive of the horse corral;  
 Sec. 17, S $\frac{1}{2}$ ;  
 Sec. 18, lots 2, 3, and 4, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , and SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
 Sec. 19, lots 1, 2, and 3, W $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
 Sec. 20, N $\frac{1}{2}$ N $\frac{1}{2}$ , SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , and W $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
 Sec. 21, N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ .

T. 1 N., R. 81 W.,

Sec. 13, S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , N $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , and SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
 Sec. 14, E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  and SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
 Sec. 22, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , S $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , and SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
 Sec. 23, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ , W $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ , and SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
 Sec. 24, N $\frac{1}{2}$ N $\frac{1}{2}$ ;  
 Sec. 26, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ .  
 Sec. 28, N $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  and SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
 Sec. 29, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ .

T. 1 S., R. 81 W.,

Sec. 6, lots 4 and 5;  
 Sec. 7, Lot 1.

T. 1 S., R. 82 W.,

Sec. 12, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  and that portion of Tract 37 in the NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 12;  
 Sec. 13, that portion of Tract 53 lying easterly of the centerline of the Colorado River, and all of Tract 54;  
 Sec. 14, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
 Sec. 22, NE $\frac{1}{4}$  and SW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
 Sec. 23, W $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
 Sec. 24, Tract 76 lying in the E $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 24;  
 Sec. 26, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
 Sec. 27, lots 1 and 2, E $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ , N $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ , N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$  and those portions of the W $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$  and the E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$  exclusive of reconveyed lands;  
 Sec. 28, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$  and Tract 81 lying in the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
 Sec. 32, Mineral Survey Nos. 13963, 18347A, and 18671;  
 Sec. 33, Mineral Survey Nos. 18801, 18671, 18347A and B, and that portion of Tract 70 lying within the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$  of Section 33.

T. 2 S., R. 82 W.,

Sec. 4, lot 22;  
 Sec. 5, that portion of Tract 39 lying within the S $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$  and NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ .  
 Sec. 7, Tracts 38 and that portion of Tract 41 within Section 7.

T. 2 S., R. 83 W.,

Sec. 23, S $\frac{1}{2}$ S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$ ;  
Sec. 26, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$  and NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ .

APPLICANT: This action is a planning amendment initiated by the BLM.

## INTRODUCTION

### PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION:

The Kremmling Resource Management Plan (RMP) would be amended to enlarge the existing Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) and identify other lands within the Colorado River corridor for river related recreation management. Most of these additional lands are upstream of Gore Canyon, the previous upper boundary of the SRMA. The action would also identify management direction for lands acquired by the BLM which are located in close proximity to the river and were acquired to enhance river related management objectives. The principal management direction for the river corridor is to provide a semi-primitive river based recreational experience in a rural setting, unencumbered by signs of industrial or urban development. The proposed action would achieve this goal and provide clear, concise, management direction for the SRMA.

The purpose of the EA is to analyze the effects of modifying the boundary of the SRMA, identifying management direction for the proposed SRMA, and establishing land use priorities for lands within the SRMA. The proposed action would identify the majority of the SRMA as a recreation priority, with other areas identified for other land use priorities. All the land use priorities identified in the proposed action would be consistent with the recreation theme of the SRMA. The action is needed to identify the value of the lands within the proposed SRMA as important for river related recreation endeavors, and provide resource protection measures conducive with this designation and user expectations.

The proposed No Surface Occupancy (NSO) stipulation for oil and gas leasing would preclude oil and gas development within the river corridor while still making the oil and gas resources available for lease. This would ensure the important recreation resources within the river corridor are protected. Although the potential for oil and gas development is considered low, this would ensure development activities would be restricted to areas outside the SRMA.

The proposed withdrawal from settlement, sale, location, or entry under the general land laws, including the mining laws, is also necessary to provide protection to important recreation resources in the river corridor. Although the overall potential for locatable mineral occurrence is considered to be low, there is always some speculative development potential. The 43 CFR 3809 surface management regulations do not provide adequate regulatory protection for the important natural resources in this area because the regulations do not totally preclude exploration and mining activities and require no notification under casual use activities. Prospecting or mining within this area would disturb the river related recreational environment and could impact the

resources. Surface-disturbing activities above the casual use level would be detrimental to protection of these resources.

Overall, the proposed action is considered necessary to protect important resource and recreation values along this segment of the Colorado River. There are important riparian, ecological, cultural, paleontological, and historic values, including National Register eligible properties within the Area. The Colorado River Headwaters Scenic Byway runs along portions of the river corridor following US Highway 40 and the Trough Road (Grand County Road #1 and Eagle County Road #11) and the river is one of the most highly utilized recreational float boating rivers in Colorado. The Area also contains critical deer and elk winter range. BLM has constructed numerous recreational facilities within the area and plans to construct more. The proposed action would be anticipated to protect these uses and values.

#### PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW:

The proposed action is subject to the following plan:

Name of Plan: Kremmling Resource Area. Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision, December 19, 1984

Applicable Amendment: Oil and Gas Plan Amendment to the Kremmling Resource Management Plan. November 11, 1991

The proposed management prescriptions have been reviewed for conformance with this plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3).

REMARKS: The proposed action is not in conformance with the existing RMP. This action would expand the SRMA boundary and incorporate the identified management prescriptions for the SRMA into the RMP as an amendment.

#### COLORADO STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH:

The proposed action and alternatives is not anticipated to have an appreciable impact on the Standards of Public Land Health (Soils. Standard #1: Wetlands, Standard #2: Vegetation/Wildlife, Standard #3: Threatened and Endangered Species, Standard #4: Water Quality, Standard #5). Where applicable, these Standards are addressed in specific resource discussions in the Affected Environment/Environmental Consequences section.

#### RELATIONSHIP TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS, OR OTHER PLANS:

The proposed action to amend the RMP is made under the authority of Sections 202 and 302 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 as amended.

## ISSUES AND CONCERNS

### PUBLIC SCOPING:

A Notice of Intent of the Plan Amendment was mailed to 150 individuals on August 23, 1999. As a result of the Notice, very limited public comment was received. The comments were considered during preparation of this document.

### MANAGEMENT CONCERNS:

The Upper Colorado River has experienced increasing public use since the Kremmling RMP was completed in 1984. The area of recreational use has expanded to include other public lands in the area. In addition, private lands have been acquired in the river corridor and they are not now under the umbrella of the RMP. The proposed amendment needs to address expanding the SRMA to include all the lands experiencing the increasing public use and provide management direction for all the Federal lands in the area.

The Upper Colorado River is utilized extensively for river related recreational endeavors, and the BLM has invested significant dollars, time, and labor in the construction and maintenance of numerous recreational facilities in the river corridor. Protection of these expenditures is necessary not only from an economic point of view, but also to ensure the recreational and scenic integrity of the river users experience.

## PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

### PROPOSED ACTION:

The proposed action would amend the Kremmling Resource Management Plan (RMP) to change the management prescriptions and the boundary of the Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA). The amendment would also establish management prescriptions for lands recently acquired within the proposed new SRMA boundary. Land use priorities would also be established for all lands within the proposed SRMA. The priorities for some lands may differ from the land use priority established in the original 1984 RMP. The lands would be withdrawn from mineral entry for a period of 50 years. The proposed management prescriptions for the SRMA include the following:

#1. Modify the boundary of the SRMA. The current SRMA boundary would be expanded to approximately ½ mile each side of the Colorado river, and would be extended upstream to include additional area upstream of the existing SRMA, as depicted on the attached maps. The existing SRMA boundary originates at Gore Canyon approximately 6 river miles downstream of Kremmling, whereas the new boundary would start approximately 7-1/2 river miles upstream of Kremmling, near Reeder Creek. The current Kremmling portion of the SRMA boundary extends downstream to the Field Office boundary near State Bridge, and the expansion proposed for the

SRMA would terminate at the same location. The SRMA continues below State Bridge and management would remain unchanged for that portion managed by the Glenwood Springs Field Office.

**#2.** Land use priorities would be changed for some public lands in the proposed SRMA. Of the 12,237 acres of public land in the SRMA, approximately 8,787 acres would be identified as a recreation priority, 2,542 acres as a wildlife priority, 833 acres as a soil priority, 35 acres as a protected area priority, and 40 acres with no priority. In addition, 20.8 miles of the Colorado River and associated tributaries would be designated as a water priority. The priorities for some lands would differ from the land use priority established in the original 1984 RMP, whereas some of the land use priorities would remain the same. The attached maps reflect the existing land use priorities in the proposed SRMA and the land use priorities associated with the proposed action.

The proposed action would identify approximately 72% of the SRMA as a recreation land use priority, approximately 21% as a wildlife land use priority, and approximately 7% as a soils land use priority. The most important wildlife habitat in the proposed SRMA would retain the wildlife land use priority established in the 1984 RMP. Areas within the proposed SRMA with soil erosion problems would retain the soils land use priority established in the 1984 RMP. Other small parcels identified with no priority or with a protected priority would retain these classifications established in the 1984 RMP. The Colorado River and major tributaries within the proposed SRMA would be identified with a water priority.

The management emphasis associated with each land use priority is explained in the 1984 RMP. This includes identified compatible and excluded uses. The specific definitions for land use priorities identified in the RMP would not be affected by this proposed amendment.

**#3.** Because of the recreation emphasis of the SRMA, the amendment would also address enlarging the existing NSO area for oil and gas development within the river corridor, to that of the new SRMA boundary. This would result in 12,237 acres of NSO within the SRMA. There are currently 4,870 acres of NSO within the boundary of the existing SRMA boundary. Consequently, this action would increase the acreage of NSO by 7,367 acres.

The amendment would also ensure that any future lands within the SRMA that are acquired by the Federal government would have an NSO stipulation for oil and gas development. There would be no affect on these lands unless acquired by the Federal government.

**#4.** The proposed amendment would also withdraw the entire 12,237 acres of Federal surface estate within the SRMA from settlement, sale, location, or entry under the general land laws, including the mining laws. It would also withdraw 1,020 acres of private or state land with Federal minerals. Additional private or State owned lands within the SRMA would be withdrawn from the lands and mining laws if they were ever acquired by the Federal government. This last category is included in the event the Federal government acquires these private lands. By including these private lands at this time, they would automatically be withdrawn if acquired.



### ALTERNATIVES:

Each of the above proposed management prescriptions (1-4) above will be analyzed separately for each resource. Following development of resource analysis and public input, a mix of any or none of the management prescriptions could be developed in the decision document for the proposed plan amendment. Consequently, the analysis of the above will provide the decision maker with a multitude of alternatives.

### NO ACTION:

Under the no action alternative, existing management would not change, and the boundary of the existing SRMA would remain as currently established. None of the beneficial or adverse impacts identified in this document would occur. The acquired lands in the SRMA would continue without planning direction, contrary to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, which requires land use planning for all public lands administered by the BLM. The opportunity to establish differing priorities for the involved land and avoid environmental impacts associated with oil and gas development, or entry under the public land laws and mining laws would be foregone.

### ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED:

Several management prescriptions as well as resource prioritization strategies were considered in the development of the proposed action. Consideration was given to identifying the entire SRMA as a recreation land use priority, but because of specific resource concerns associated with other resource programs, this alternative was eliminated from further consideration. All of the proposed action land use priorities are in conformance with the recreational management theme for the river corridor and the recreational emphasis associated with the SRMA expansion. No other alternatives were identified which provided the required resource protection while satisfying user expectations associated with the Colorado River SRMA.

## **AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS/RESIDUAL IMPACTS**

Under the following discussion for Management Prescription #2 (Identifying Land Use Priorities), some of the public land in the proposed SRMA would retain the same land use priority as established in the original 1984 RMP. The portions of the proposed SRMA that would be identified with a wildlife, soils, protected or no land use priority were identified with that priority in the original 1984 RMP. Consequently, there would be minimal if any environmental impact associated with the identification of these priorities, since there would be no change from the existing situation. The majority of the proposed land use priority changes are associated with conversion of other land use priorities to a recreation land use priority. The following environmental impact discussion for Management Prescription #2 is developed on that premise.

## GENERAL SETTING:

The proposed SRMA involves lands located within a corridor approximately ½ mile each side of the Colorado River from approximately 7 ½ miles upstream of Kremmling, downstream to State Bridge. The RMP provides additional descriptive information on the physical and social resources of the Area, as well as the SRMA.

## CRITICAL ELEMENTS

### ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

#### Affected Environment:

The existing and proposed SRMA expansion are primarily used by, and located adjacent to lands owned by nonminority populations and higher income populations. These owner and user populations include ranchers, wealthy property owners, outdoor enthusiasts and boating recreationists.

#### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1,2,3, and 4 (Boundary Adjustment, Identifying Land Use Priorities, NSO for oil and gas leasing, Land/Mineral Withdrawal): None of the proposed Management Prescriptions would have a disproportionate impact on racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups

### INVASIVE, NONNATIVE SPECIES

#### Affected Environment:

Canada thistle, a very common noxious weed, is found within the river corridor. Canada thistle is not a State listed species requiring mandatory control. Tamarisk, an invasive tree, has not yet been discovered within the river corridor above State Bridge, but is found further downstream, outside the Field Office boundary, near Burns. The BLM has an active noxious weed control program and would pursue treatment and eradication of any noxious weed populations which become established in the proposed SRMA.

#### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1,2,3, and 4 (Boundary Adjustment, Identifying Land Use Priorities, NSO for oil and gas leasing, Land/Mineral Withdrawal): None of the proposed Management Prescriptions would have an impact on the spread or management of invasive, nonnative species.

### AIR QUALITY

#### Affected Environment:

The SRMA is located within the Middle Park Area. The Kremmling Resource Management Plan describes the air quality in the area, which is generally good. Since the completion of the plan, the tepee burner has been removed from Kremmling and fewer town residents are using wood stoves.

#### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1 and 2: (Boundary Adjustment, Identifying Land Use Priorities): Neither of these proposed Management Prescriptions would affect air quality.

Management Prescriptions #3 and 4: (NSO for oil and gas leasing, Land/Mineral Withdrawal): These two proposed Management Prescriptions would limit development activity in the proposed SRMA and would help maintain air quality. Possible fugitive dust from surface disturbing activities would not occur.

## CULTURAL RESOURCES

### Affected Environment:

Colorado's Rivers have long been used as relatively easy travel corridors through the mountains and plains by prehistoric native americans, historic trappers, miners and settlers. Trails followed the rivers and where terrain allowed, camp sites formed that were often used repeatedly extending back several thousands of years. Later, some trails became roads and railroad beds. The Colorado River is no exception, with a corridor rich with cultural resources and a focal point of regional history. Numerous cultural sites have been recorded along the upper river corridor. Prehistoric sites include camps, lithic scatters, eagle traps and vision quest locations. Historic sites include structures and artifacts related to early mining, railroad building and ranching. The best known prehistoric site, the Yarmony Pit House, is the oldest known prehistoric habitation in Colorado and dates to 6,200 years before present.

### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1 (Boundary Adjustment): Extending the boundaries of the SRMA would not impact cultural resources.

Management Prescription #2 (Identifying Land Use Priorities): Identifying the majority of the land in the SRMA with a recreation priority may lead to detrimental impacts to cultural resources. The "build it and they will come" syndrome would likely create increased numbers of visitors, and greater impacts to cultural sites and artifacts from theft and vandalism. The cumulative effects from repeated casual use could also impact cultural sites if informal trails and camp sites increase in number and use. Sites containing surface artifacts and structural elements are particularly vulnerable to theft and vandalism. Mitigation for these impacts should be addressed in future river management plans that provide cultural site mitigation as part of ongoing efforts to protect and study these sites, as well as providing the public a broad and interesting recreational experience.

Any future developments in the SRMA would be evaluated in separate environmental assessments and require compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, regardless of land use priority. Compliance would require cultural inventory to identify cultural sites that could be impacted by development. Cultural sites would be recorded and evaluated for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places. Sites would either be avoided or mitigated.

Management Prescription #3 (NSO for oil and gas leasing): Although there is little apparent potential for oil and gas development within the SRMA, there would likely be both positive and negative impacts under this management prescription. On the positive side there would be no new ground disturbance for developing well pads and access roads, and thus a reduced likelihood

that cultural sites would be impacted by construction, development and reclamation activities related to energy development, and public users who subsequently use developments to gain greater access to public lands previously only accessible on foot or horseback. On the negative side, O & G development can be credited with the completion of numerous cultural inventories and the discovery of numerous cultural sites, during compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The cultural data base has been greatly expanded as a result of O & G development. Precluding surface occupancy could result in fewer cultural sites being timely identified, evaluated and protected through avoidance or mitigation.

Management Prescription #4 (Land/Mineral Withdrawal): Although there appears to be little potential for precious metal mining, precluding mining within the SRMA would have a generally positive effect on cultural resources. Under this prescription there would be a reduced threat to cultural sites that could be impacted by exploration, construction development and reclamation, and subsequent public users who use developments to gain greater access to public lands not previously accessible except on foot or horseback.

#### FLOODPLAINS, WETLANDS, RIPARIAN ZONES, AND ALLUVIAL VALLEYS

(Colorado Standards for Public Land Health, Standard #2 and wetland vegetation information for Standard #3)

##### Affected Environment:

The Colorado River public land sections were inventoried by the BLM for stream and riparian conditions in 1976 and 1980. In 1993, the Colorado Heritage Program inventoried the entire river corridor for riparian conditions. Within the proposed SRMA, much of the river's riparian is bordered by roads and the railroad. Natural flows have been drastically altered with several upstream dams and major transbasin diversions. The river channel has been formed for these larger historic flows and in many places is wide and shallow under current flows. Upstream from Gore Canyon, the river crosses a wide alluvial floodplain that is mostly irrigated farmland. This irrigation has maintained some small sloughs and wetland vegetation away from the riparian zone itself. Riparian vegetation is dominated by clumped narrowleaf cottonwood communities, and willows. Downstream from the canyon, the riparian zone generally narrows as the river is more confined. Riparian vegetation is dominated by sandbar willows on the banks and dogwood, alder, and ponderosa pine within the floodplain. Due to the water diversions, much of the floodplain currently used for recreation sites is a historic floodplain, and even under 3,000 cfs flows, are no longer flooded. The Upper Colorado River within the proposed SRMA boundaries is considered to be meeting standard #2 and in proper functioning condition considering the altered hydrology.

##### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1 (Boundary Adjustment): By simply expanding the SRMA, these resources would not be affected, nor the ability to meet standards affected. There would be no impact to floodplains or flood hazard or wetland resources. A SRMA designation implies that the BLM would intensively manage the area for recreation uses. This management, if it employs best management practices, can help mitigate the impacts of already occurring recreational use. Regardless of the boundary, it is specific land actions that could impact these areas. Federal laws require protection for wetland areas and BLM policy promotes riparian protection, but increased recreational use along the river corridor impacts riparian communities as trails are created, soil compacted, and exotic plants are spread. If additional private lands are acquired in the SRMA,

recreational use on these lands could also impact riparian vegetation due to increased streambank impacts and altered irrigation water use. This would be evaluated in any future land exchange or acquisition environmental documents.

**Management Prescription #2 (Identifying Land Use Priorities):** The proposed action would identify the majority of the SRMA as a recreation priority. The proposed action would additionally establish or retain a water, soil, wildlife, protected, or no priority for some lands within the SRMA. The Colorado River, as well as other major tributaries within the proposed SRMA boundary would be identified with a water priority. The management prescription for the recreation priority indicates that soils, watershed, and water quality are compatible with recreation and that these resources would be "protected through limits or restrictions placed on location of recreation developments, certain types of recreation activities (e.g., OHVs), and other compatible uses.". The proposed land use priorities, therefore, would not directly impact wetland/floodplain values or the ability to meet standard #2. Specific land use actions or promoting the area for increased recreational use could result in the negative impacts described under Prescription #1 and would require mitigative measures. Recreational uses include many nonpermitted actions, so impacts from recreation can be harder to control than permitted activities (e.g., livestock or oil & gas). There is no benefit to wetlands/floodplains, etc. in the portions of the proposed SRMA identified as a recreation priority, and there could be some negative effects if recreation uses increase.

**Management Prescription #3 (NSO for oil and gas leasing):** Although oil and gas development is not expected to be a major land use within the proposed SRMA, management prescription #3, would automatically provide protection for wetlands and floodplains from direct or indirect impacts associated with that activity. Existing riparian conditions could be maintained and the ability to meet standards would not be impacted.

**Management Prescription #4 (Land/Mineral Withdrawal):** By closing the SRMA to mining, existing riparian conditions could be maintained and the ability to meet standards would not be impacted.

## NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

### Affected Environment:

There are no known Native American religious, traditional use or burial locations within the proposed SRMA boundary. Cultural resource inventories have been completed for various projects within this area.

### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1, 2, 3, and 4 (Boundary Adjustment, Identifying Land Use Priorities, NSO for oil and gas leasing, Land/Mineral Withdrawal): Consultation on the proposed action was completed August 23, 1999. It was determined the proposed action would not affect Native American religious, traditional use or burial locations.

## PRIME AND UNIQUE FARMLANDS

### Affected Environment:

There are no prime or unique farmlands within the proposed SRMA boundary. Naturally or artificially irrigated lands that are "cropped regularly" are considered state important farmlands and are of local importance. Within the SRMA, there are privately owned hay meadows that are considered of local importance. Acquired parcels, such as the Thompson property, that support irrigated lands are also included.

### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1 (Boundary Adjustment): There would be no impact to any prime or unique farmlands. Intensively managing for recreation could reduce the acres of state important farmlands.

Management Prescription #2 (Identifying Land Use Priorities): There would be no impact to any prime or unique farmlands. Intensively managing for recreation could reduce the acres of state important farmlands. Future acquisition of private lands within the SRMA could also reduce the acres of state important farmlands. This would be evaluated in any future land exchange or acquisition environmental documents.

Management Prescription #3 and #4 (NSO for oil and gas leasing, Land/Mineral Withdrawal): There would be no impact to any prime or unique farmlands, or state important farmlands by either of these management prescriptions.

## SOILS

(Colorado Standards for Public Land Health, Standard #1)

### Affected Environment:

Soils in the proposed SRMA are described in the RMP. Within the proposed SRMA a few parcels are identified as soil priority areas in the 1984 RMP. These soils are all formed from Pierre shales, which are a marine shale, and have higher salt contents, poor vegetative cover, and steeper slopes. The soils were designated within the RMP as having soil erosion problems and that reducing soil loss is the priority for these lands. These areas are not immediately adjacent to the river. The rest of the proposed SRMA corridor is considered to be meeting standard #1 due to the lack of identified problems or concerns.

### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1 (Boundary Adjustment): Expanding the SRMA would not directly impact soil resources or their ability to meet standard #1. Increased recreational use (with or without any boundary adjustment) can increase soil loss and affect the ability of an area to meet standard #1. The proposed SRMA contains arid uplands that naturally have sparse amounts of soil protection, and expose erodible soils when disturbed. Existing and future developed recreation sites help concentrate uses to appropriate areas that have best management practices, but off site use would occur to some degree.

Management Prescription #2 (Identifying Land Use Priorities): The proposed action would identify the majority of the SRMA as a recreation priority. The management prescription for the

recreation priority indicates that soils, watershed, and water quality are compatible with recreation and that these resources would be "protected through limits or restrictions placed on location of recreation developments, certain types of recreation activities (e.g., OHVs), and other compatible uses.". The proposed land use priorities, therefore, would not directly impact soils as the existing land use priorities are also compatible with soils. The proposed action would establish or retain a water, soil, wildlife, protected, or no priority for some lands within the SRMA. Areas where soils are recognized as fragile remain a soil priority in the proposed action and efforts would be made to minimize soil loss. Under Prescription #2, soils could still meet standard #1. Wildlife and livestock objectives are compatible with the proposed land use priorities and tend to include increasing forage which indirectly promotes good ground cover and reduces soil loss.

Management Prescription #3 (NSO for oil and gas leasing): By placing NSO stipulations on oil and gas leases, future impacts to soils could be reduced by lessening the amount of surface disturbance. There would be no impact on the ability to meet standard #1.

Management Prescription #4 (Land/Mineral Withdrawal): By prohibiting mining within the proposed SRMA, future impacts to soils could be reduced by lessening the amount of surface disturbance. There would be no change in the ability to meet standard #1.

## THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

(Colorado Standards for Public Land Health, Standard #4)

### Affected Environment:

The Colorado River included in the proposed SRMA expansion corridor provides important habitat for bald eagles and peregrine falcons. Both are Federally listed endangered species. Bald eagles are common residents along the Colorado from October 1 through May 1 annually. Bald eagles perch and roost in large cottonwood and ponderosa pine trees along the river. Road and rail-killed deer, elk, and rabbits provide food for bald eagles during the time they inhabit the Colorado River corridor. Fish are also an important food source.

Peregrine falcons have nested successfully in upper Gore Canyon over the past 4 years. Several peregrine nests have been located and monitored by Colorado Division of Wildlife biologists and numbers of young falcons produced have been recorded. Little additional data such as hunting areas, prey species, etc. have been collected for the peregrines nesting in Gore Canyon.

### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1 (Boundary Adjustment): Future management of the proposed SRMA would need to be structured to ensure the SRMA expansion does not adversely impact bald eagles or peregrines as a result of increased recreation use. An increase in camping along the Colorado River could result in loss of habitat features such as large cottonwood and ponderosa pine trees. These losses could result from intentional cutting or burning by accidental fire caused by recreationists. Recreational activities such as climbing and hiking could disturb nesting peregrines in Gore Canyon if visitor use increases as a result of the boundary adjustment. The RMP requires that recreation management actions provide protection for threatened and endangered species habitat by placing limits on recreation development and/or recreational activity. If public use of the area increases, close monitoring of the situation and adherence to the

RMP prior to implementing future management actions may be necessary to avoid impacts to bald eagles, peregrines or other sensitive wildlife species.

Management Prescription #2 (Identifying Land Use Priorities): The proposed action would identify the majority of the SRMA as a recreation priority. The proposed action would additionally establish or retain a water, soil, wildlife, protected, or no priority for some lands within the SRMA. The most valuable wildlife habitat with the proposed SRMA corridor would retain the wildlife priority established in the 1984 RMP. The management prescription for the recreation priority indicates that wildlife is compatible with recreation and that "Critical wildlife habitats, including threatened and endangered species habitats would be protected by limits placed on the location of recreation developments, certain types of recreation activities, and other compatible uses." The recreation priority also provides for intensive management of wildlife habitat within a recreation priority area. If the enlargement of the recreation priority area increases float boating activities and/or upland recreation such as hiking, rock climbing, etc. there could be increasing conflict between recreationists and wildlife. Conflict resolution of these issues may dictate management actions sensitive to wildlife concerns to avoid loss of bald eagle habitat and disruption of peregrine falcon breeding activities.

Management Prescription #3 and #4 (NSO for oil and gas leasing, Land/Mineral Withdrawal): This prescription is likely to benefit bald eagles and peregrine falcons by prohibiting surface occupancy for oil and gas development or mining within the SRMA. Disturbance of bald eagle winter habitat as well as winter populations of eagles would be precluded with this prescription. Peregrine falcon breeding activities would not be disrupted by oil and gas activity/ mining activity with implementation of this prescription.

## VEGETATION

(Colorado Standards for Public Land Health. All upland vegetation information for Standard #3)

### Affected Environment:

The uplands within the corridor of the proposed SRMA are dominated by three vegetation types, pinyon-juniper, sagebrush grasslands, and haymeadows. The southwest portion which is the warmest and driest segment is typified by steep slopes dominated by a pinyon-juniper vegetation type. The species common in the understory include Indian ricegrass, blue grama, western and bluebunch wheatgrass. Common forbs include eriogonum, globe mallow, milkvetch, and phlox. This vegetation type extends from State Bridge to the mouth of Gore Canyon. Because of the steepness of most of the southwest portion of the proposed SRMA, there are few impacts on vegetation from existing uses. Vegetative health on the uplands is generally excellent.

The vegetation types on uplands from Gore Canyon to Reeder Creek are a checkerboard of sagebrush grasslands and irrigated hay meadows. The species commonly seen on the drier sites are big mountain sagebrush, fescues, wheatgrasses, and native bluegrasses. Forbs include eriogonum, balsamroot, fringed sage, and low rabbitbrush. The vegetation in the hay meadows includes timothy, clover, meadow foxtail, wheatgrasses and bromes. A description of riparian vegetation can be found in the Floodplains and Wetlands section of this document.

The area between Gore Canyon and Kremmling includes some scattered parcels of BLM where livestock grazing is authorized. These are "Custodial" grazing allotments that are included in



larger parcels of private land. There is limited opportunity to affect management or apply Standards for Public Land Health on these lands. Assessments for vegetative health have not been conducted on these lands.

The lands between Kremmling and Reeder Creek are mostly private. There are two recent acquisitions through land exchanges in this area. One of these, the Thompson property east of Highway 9 along the Colorado River is irrigated and contains mostly riparian vegetation. The other parcel near Reeder Creek allows access to the Colorado River, this parcel is also dominated by riparian vegetation.

A portion of the Mayhoffer allotment south of county road 33 near the power substation was assessed for Standards in 1998, as part of the grazing permit renewal process. The area included in the proposed boundary was evaluated as not meeting the vegetation portion of Standard #3. A change of grazing management on this allotment is being developed to improve vegetative health.

The upper end of the proposed boundary near Reeder Creek is included in the East Cedar Ridge allotment. This allotment was assessed for Standards in 1998 as part of the grazing permit renewal process. The area included in the proposed boundary is meeting the vegetation portion of Standard #3, however, the occurrence of hounds tongue was noted and is targeted for treatment.

#### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1 (Boundary Adjustment): The adjustment of the boundary would not directly impact vegetation in the proposed SRMA.

Management Prescription #2 (Identifying Land Use Priorities): The proposed action would identify the majority of the SRMA as a recreation priority. The proposed action would additionally establish or retain a water, soil, wildlife, protected, or no priority for some lands within the SRMA. If expanding the recreation priority results in increased river access points, dispersed camping, or development of access and parking areas for fishing, it may detrimentally impact vegetative health. There is the potential that changing the Yarmony Common, Mayhoffer, and East Cedar Ridge allotments from a livestock priority to a recreation priority would de-emphasize the current vegetation management in the area and current use of the areas as forage for livestock as well as cover and forage for wildlife. By adhering to the RMP, which provides for intensive or limited management of livestock, as well as intensive management of wildlife habitat in recreation priority areas, the priority change should not impact vegetative management practices in the SRMA.

Management Prescription #3 and #4 (NSO for oil and gas leasing, Land/Mineral Withdrawal): These management prescriptions would eliminate activities that could potentially be detrimental to the vegetative resource.

#### WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

##### Affected Environment:

The BLM does not produce or dispose of hazardous wastes within the SRMA.

#### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1,2,3, and 4 (Boundary Adjustment, Identifying Land Use Priorities, NSO for Oil and Gas Leasing, Land/Mineral Withdrawal): These proposed Management Prescriptions would have no impact on the generation or disposal of hazardous wastes.

#### WATER QUALITY, SURFACE OR GROUND

(Colorado Standards for Public Land Health, Standard #5)

##### Affected Environment:

The Proposed SRMA includes public segments of the Upper Colorado River that are considered to be manageable segments. These segments, according to the RMP, would be protected to maintain minimum state water quality standards. The 1998 Unified Watershed Assessment for the state of Colorado, ranked the Upper Colorado River basin as a Category 2 watershed, which is a watershed meeting water quality goals. Generally water quality is considered good in the area, and the USGS gage located at the mouth of Gore Canyon is meeting state water quality standards. The 303(d) Monitoring and Evaluation List, however, does include all tributaries to the Colorado River above State Bridge as needing additional data collection to determine if there is excessive sediment loading occurring. At this time, specific tributaries or segments have not been identified, nor a level of impairment determined. The BLM has collected water quality samples on Reeder Creek, Sulphur Gulch, Muddy Creek and some tributaries. Water quality appears to mostly reflect geologic conditions although continued measures to reduce nonpoint source pollution and implement best management practices are critical.

##### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1 (Boundary Adjustment): Expanding the SRMA boundary does not directly impact water quality or the area's ability to meet standard #5. The SRMA designation implies the BLM would intensively manage for recreation within the area, which could help mitigate existing recreation uses by providing sanitation, closing user-created trails, and developing recreation sites with best management practices. Recreation uses do expand beyond developed areas, however, and increased dispersed use can impact water quality.

Management Prescription #2 (Identifying Land Use Priorities): The proposed action would identify the majority of the SRMA as a recreation priority. The proposed action would additionally establish or retain a water, soil, wildlife, protected, or no priority for some lands within the SRMA. The segments of the Colorado River within the SRMA either retain or are identified as a water priority. The RMP states that recreation priority land uses are compatible with water resources, and that water quality would be protected through limits or restrictions placed on specific recreational locations or proposals. The existing land uses, as well as the proposed land use priorities are compatible with water quality. Neither set of land use priorities affects the area's ability to meet standard #5.

Management Prescription #3 and #4(NSO for Oil and Gas Leasing, Land/Mineral Withdrawal ): By placing the proposed NSO stipulation on oil and gas development and withdrawing the extended SRMA from mining, future possible impacts could be avoided. The area would continue to have the ability to meet standard #5.

## WILDERNESS, AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN, WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

### Affected Environment:

The focus of the SRMA is the Colorado River and its water based recreational uses. The recreation uses are focused on the river itself and the area immediately adjacent to the river with a scenic component that extends to the first major topographic break. No lands or waterways within the proposed SRMA are designated as Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, or Wild and Scenic Rivers.

### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1, 2, 3, and 4 (Boundary Adjustment, Identifying Land Use Priorities, NSO for Oil and Gas Leasing, Land/Mineral Withdrawal): There are no Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas or Wild and Scenic River designations that would be affected by the proposed action. The Colorado River and its local tributaries have not been studied for Wild and Scenic suitability. The proposed action would have no impact on the two Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) managed by BLM within the Kremmling Field Office.

## WILDLIFE, AQUATIC

(Colorado Standards for Public Land Health, All aquatic wildlife information for Standard #3);

### Affected Environment:

The SRMA includes numerous miles of the Colorado River, short segments of six additional perennial streams, and the Blue River. All of these with the exception of Barger Gulch, provide habitat for a variety of coldwater fish, waterbirds, and several species of aquatic mammals. Some of the more common fish species inhabiting these waters include brook trout, German brown trout, rainbow trout, and several species of suckers and minnows. Some of the waterbirds common to the waters included in the SRMA include mallards, green-winged teal, Canada geese, common mergansers, water ouzels, kingfishers, and killdeer. Beavers, muskrats, mink and to a lesser extent river otters are common in the SRMA.

### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1 and #2 (Boundary Adjustment, Identifying Land Use Priorities): These proposed management prescriptions are not likely to impact aquatic habitat unless the changes increase recreational activities such as fishing, floating, and camping adjacent to the streams and rivers located in the SRMA. Waterbird breeding could be disrupted, as well as fish spawning as a result of potential increases in floating, fishing, and camping in the Colorado River corridor.

Management Prescription #3 and #4 (NSO for Oil and Gas Leasing, Land/Mineral Withdrawal): These proposed management prescriptions could preclude aquatic habitat degradation or losses of habitat associated with oil and gas development or mining activity. The prescriptions would prohibit development activity in critical upland habitat areas associated with rivers and streams within the SRMA.

## WILDLIFE, TERRESTRIAL

(Colorado Standards for Public Land Health. All terrestrial wildlife information for Standard #3)

### Affected Environment:

The wide variety of habitat types ranging from Douglas fir forest to irrigated hay meadow which occur in the SRMA provide habitat for numerous wildlife species. Large mammals inhabiting the Area include mule deer, Rocky Mountain elk, mountain lions, black bears. Small mammals including coyotes, bobcats, foxes, cottontail rabbits, and white-tailed jackrabbit are also common. A variety of birds also inhabit the SRMA and some of the more common species include golden eagles, red-tailed hawks, prairie falcons, blue grouse, and numerous songbirds, woodpeckers, and scavengers. Golden eagles and prairie falcons nest in the cliffs adjacent to the Colorado River in Gore Canyon and below Radium.

The upland habitat which lies adjacent to the Colorado River is especially important winter range for mule deer and Rocky Mountain elk. These animals migrate to these lands from adjacent high elevation forest habitats to the north and spend winter months on the ridges and slopes which lie north of the Colorado River. Typical winters in the area often involve extreme low temperatures and heavy snowfall. The period of time deer and elk utilize this area is heavily dependant upon these seasonal climatic conditions.

### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1 (Boundary Adjustment): The proposed SRMA boundary adjustment is not likely to impact terrestrial wildlife unless the expansion of the SRMA increases recreational use of the area. Increases in activities such as camping and OHV travel in uplands adjacent to the Colorado River could have negative impacts on terrestrial wildlife if the proposed SRMA expansion attracts more recreationists.

Management Prescription #2 (Identifying Land Use Priorities): The proposed action would identify the majority of the SRMA as a recreation priority. The proposed action would additionally establish or retain a water, soil, wildlife, protected, or no priority for some lands within the SRMA. The most critical wildlife habitat in the proposed SRMA would retain a wildlife priority. The management prescription for the recreation priority indicates that wildlife is compatible with recreation and that "Critical wildlife habitats, including threatened and endangered species habitats would be protected by limits placed on the location of recreation developments, certain types of recreation activities, and other compatible uses." The recreation priority also provides for intensive management of wildlife habitat within a recreation priority area. The retention of a wildlife priority for the most critical wildlife habitat, as well as the RMP language should avoid any conflict with wildlife as a result of the proposed land use priorities.

Management Prescription #3 and #4 (NSO for Oil and Gas Leasing, Land/Mineral Withdrawal): These management prescriptions would protect important wildlife habitat from disturbance and change. Increasing the acreage of NSO and a mineral withdrawal would protect additional habitat from development including road construction, pad construction, etc. and potential conflicting uses of these developments by recreationists in important wildlife habitat.

## NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS

### PALEONTOLOGY

#### Affected Environment:

The intra-canyon (basin) areas of the SRMA contain Mesozoic Formations, some of which are known for important vertebrate and invertebrate fossils. Tertiary Formations, mostly east of the Gore Range, are also known for such fossils. The SRMA area has yielded numerous important paleontologic resources in the past.

#### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1,2,3, and 4 (Boundary Adjustment, Identifying Land Use Priorities, NSO for oil and gas leasing, Land/Mineral Withdrawal): The proposed action is anticipated to have only minor impacts on paleontologic resources. The proposed boundary expansion, as well as the proposed management prescriptions could result in less development activity in the SRMA. This would reduce the number of paleontologic surveys completed prior to surface disturbing activity. The possibility of discovering important paleontologic resources as a result of development proposals is not highly probable, and this impact is not considered to be important. Most fossils would remain in the ground, and yet available for future discovery.

### FOREST MANAGEMENT:

No commercial forest lands are present within the proposed SRMA. Therefore, there would be no impact to forest management associated with this action.

### GEOLOGY AND MINERALS

#### Affected Environment:

The SRMA consists of a narrow corridor along the Colorado River from above Kremmling downstream to State Bridge. This area includes: river alluvium and terraces; small, low relief sedimentary rock basins; and high relief canyons in Precambrian rocks. There has been mineral activity in this area in all three of the Federal mineral types, salable, leasable and locatable. A detailed analysis of mineral potential of the area is covered in a separate mineral report for the proposed SRMA.

**Salable Minerals:** Salable minerals include sand and gravel, rip-rap, decorative stone and moss rock. Much of the low lying areas of Middle Park (The non-mountainous part of Grand County east of the Park Range, and west of the Front Range) have considerable volumes of sand and gravel and alluvial materials. This includes areas near the Colorado River, Williams Fork River, Fraser River, Blue River, Muddy Creek, Reeder Creek, and Troublesome Creek. The terraces that line much of these valleys contain considerable amounts of these materials. Similarly, areas in Eagle County near the Colorado River, Azure Valley, Sheephorn Creek, Eagle River and Piney Creek also contain these materials. The recreation, soils, and protection priority areas in the existing SRMA are closed to new mineral material sales by existing RMP decisions. In the remaining sections of the SRMA, mineral material sales are discretionary. Because of the

abundant mineral material availability in the region, the SRMA is not important to meeting local or regional demands for salable minerals.

**Leasable Minerals:** Leasable minerals include Coal, Oil and Gas, Oil Shale, Geothermal and Phosphate minerals. No phosphatic, oil shale, or coal minerals occur, nor has the US Geological Survey (USGS) identified any areas prospectively valuable (P.V.) for these minerals near the proposed SRMA boundary.

Geothermal There are no geothermal resources in the SRMA that the USGS classifies as P. V. for geothermal resources. There are important geothermal resources located in the region, but outside the boundaries of the SRMA. One of the more visible, is the Hot Sulphur Springs located several miles upstream of the SRMA at Hot Sulphur Springs, Colorado. There is a warm spring within the SRMA located near Radium on the Colorado River. It is approximately 100 degree F. in temperature, and has minimal volume. This spring area is not identified by the USGS as being P.V. for geothermal resources. It is thought to only have value as a recreational resource to campers and river runners in the immediate area.

Oil and Gas Very limited oil and gas interest, activity, or drilling has occurred in the region, with no drilling activity having occurred in the proposed SRMA area. No oil and gas production occurs in either Eagle or Grand Counties, with little potential in the proposed SRMA boundary. Only a small portion of the proposed SRMA lies within areas delineated by USGS as P.V. for oil and gas (in some areas above big Gore Canyon, and below Red Canyon only). No oil and gas leases currently occur in the townships that contain the SRMA. Only 5 leases have been issued in the past 25 years in the proposed SRMA area, and those leases covered only small areas within the SRMA. The most recent of these leases expired in 1993. Any future oil and gas leasing in the presently existing SRMA boundary would be subject to a NSO stipulation, in accordance with the Kremmling Oil and Gas RMP Amendment completed in 1991. This document indicates oil and gas activity would change the setting of the SRMA from semi-primitive to rural or urban. The proposed action would expand the NSO stipulation to include the new proposed SRMA boundary consistent with the rationale in the 1991 RMP amendment. Little potential exists for oil and gas development in the proposed SRMA area.

**Locatable Minerals:** Hard rock and placer minerals that are not included in the above categories are locatable, and fall under the 1872 Mining Law. Of these, only copper, pyrite uranium and placer gold have been identified within or near the proposed SRMA boundary.

Copper: Copper mineralization lies at the SRMA in the southern parts of Township 1 South, Ranges 82 and 83 West, from Copper Spur, along the Copper Flats and Yarmony Park areas into the SRMA at Red Canyon (at the improved Island campsite). Copper mineralization also lies in some outcrops southeast of the SRMA, 3 miles southeast of Kremmling.

Several mine openings exist on the trend from near Copper Spur at the west, to the Colorado River on the east, and a number of mining claims were patented for copper in and surrounding portions of the SRMA in the early 1900s on this trend. Although considerable prospecting, claim locating and small adits were driven at this time, only once was any ore produced and shipped, and that was a single railroad car load from the mine at Copper Spur, outside of the

proposed SRMA. A sizable tunnel and adit exists on the Copper King, First Chance and Second Chance patented mining claims in the SRMA, high above the island campsite at Red Canyon. However, activity was isolated to a few years around 1907 and 1908, and no shipments or production occurred. No further activity has occurred at these claims. No production or shipments occurred from any of the mining claims adjacent to or within the proposed SRMA boundary. At the sole mine that produced, economics were never profitable, and no copper activity has occurred in the region since the 1920s.

An adit, and shallow diggings and trenching have also occurred for low grade copper on the south side of Junction Butte, 2 miles south of Kremmling and south of the proposed SRMA boundary. The adit dates from the early 1900s, and the trenching appears to be from the 1940s or 1950s. No more recent work can be found in this area. No BLM records of any production, nor any locating or patenting of mining claims exists for this locale. No other areas of copper mineralization exist within the proposed SRMA boundary. There are no economically valuable copper resources or occurrences within the proposed SRMA boundary.

Pyrite Pyrite (iron sulphide) nodules occur sporadically along a specific level of strata in the Cretaceous Mancos (Pierre) Shale near Harmony on a cliff above the Colorado River. An old road, currently a trail, was built to this cliff occurrence. Although there has been activity at this location recently, it was not for pyrite or iron as a valuable mineral. There is no current market for iron sulphide or pyrite as an economic mineral. No economically valuable pyrite exists within the SRMA boundary.

Placer Gold: Considerable prospecting activity has occurred along the Colorado River (both within the proposed SRMA area, as well as the length of the river from its headwaters into the adjacent states downstream). This interest has dated from the first settlers in western Colorado, through the 1980s. Two mining claims have been patented for placer gold in the SRMA area—one at State Bridge, and the other south of the river near Rancho Del Rio. Neither are producing, or have ever produced and shipped gold in commercial quantities. The area has been analyzed for gold values by numerous investigators. Dr. Dell Foutz explored the area for a number of years while conducting field camps near Radium. He lists anything from 1 to 150 grains of gold per 5 lb. sample in the SRMA area. Almost all gold he has found is very fine, "flour gold", with the exception of a few small grains. He wrote of the Radium area: "all the gold that I recovered was only worth a few pennies". In personal communication with the Kremmling Field Office Geologist, he stated that only one small particular gravel terrace near Radium really had any potential, and even it was certainly subeconomic, even during the short lived period of \$600/oz. gold values. Dr. Ben Parker has reviewed the area, and the Colorado State Survey has published his findings. He states that the Colorado River terrace gravels in Grand and Eagle counties contain some gold and have been worked. The principal workings lie outside of (downstream from) the SRMA area, but some old minor workings occur in Gore Canyon. He states that the gold is concentrated in only the lowest 7 feet of the gravels, on bedrock. He found the gold was fine-grained and difficult to recover, with much black sand. The Kremmling Field Office Geologist sampled several of the terrace levels, as well as recent alluvium in the Pumphouse to Rancho del Rio area. Results were very lean, with 7 bulk samples of 260 to 950 pounds each (averaging around 700 lbs), yielding from 0 to .0007 grams gold on recent alluvium and

floodplain deposits, to a high of .0188 grams of gold on a terrace near Radium. The gold was in very fine flakes, and difficult to recover.

In a brief discussion in a USGS geologic map in the area (Kremmling quadrangle), a report of a single fine (0.1 mm) gold flake was found in an old prospect in a quartz vein in Precambrian rocks in the Gore Range near the SRMA. Below this prospect, minor gold placer activity was reported as occurring at Canyon Creek during the mid 1960s. There is no record of mining claim locations for either of these locales. This placer is of very limited extent, and appears to have been worked in several different periods, each time abandoned with no notable production.

There are no nearby gold lode mining claims, no coarse placer gold, and no other likely sources for the metal near the SRMA. Placer gold values (in \$/ cubic yard) range from 0 to 23 cents per yard. The most recent economic analysis on placer gold in the region states that a minimum mining cost of \$5.53 per yard existed in 1996 on the Colorado River near the Colorado-Utah border. The gold values within the proposed SRMA clearly fall well below any reasonable economic threshold, and no gold exists in an economically valuable mineral deposit within the proposed SRMA boundary.

Uranium: Considerable uranium mining activity occurred near Kremmling in the late 1950s through 1960s period. The US Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) explored for uranium by drilling in the Tertiary sediments east and north of Kremmling in the 1950s. Trenching and exploration by private firms also occurred in the area during this period. Most of this activity was centered on poorly consolidated sandstones and soil deposits that either contained carbon material or had some mineral spring activity in association with it. This combination occurs in the Tertiary Troublesome and Middle Park Formations in Middle Park. Only uneconomic, low grade deposits were discovered. No mining on any commercial scale, or production ever occurred from this area.

A single uranium mine opening lies within the proposed SRMA area, southeast of Kremmling on private land above Gore Canyon. This opening lies in Mesozoic sedimentary rocks, and is reported to contain minor veinlets of uranium minerals. No record of any production exists from this prospect.

After the early 1980s the Federal government removed price supports and purchasing agreements for uranium minerals, and the uranium mineral markets have been very depressed. Very little demand or interest has occurred in the uranium metals market in the U.S. since that date. All uranium mining claims in the Kremmling and SRMA area were abandoned by 1981 (Phillips Uranium), or 1986 (Sunoco Energy Co.). There has been no uranium exploration or mining activity in the area over the last 15 years or more. Uranium is thought to be of no economic value within the SRMA.

#### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1 (Boundary Adjustment): Modifying the boundary of the SRMA would have minimal impact to salable, leasable or locatable minerals. In the proposed SRMA expansion area, a changing emphasis to recreation associated with the SRMA designation, may result in more emphasis being placed on recreation and less on development.



Management Prescription #2 (Identifying Land Use Priorities): The proposed action would identify the majority of the SRMA as a recreation priority. The proposed action would additionally establish or retain a water, soil, wildlife, protected, or no priority for some lands within the SRMA. These proposed changes would have minimal affect on leasable or locatable minerals. All the proposed priorities still allow development of mineral resources, with the exception of salable minerals. With salable minerals the recreation, soils, and protected priority areas prohibit any new mineral material sales. The expansion of these priorities would increase the amount of land closed to mineral material sales. This would not have an impact on the regional availability of sand and gravel or other salable minerals.

Management Prescription #3 (NSO for Oil and Gas Leasing): This proposed management prescription would have no affect on mineral resources with the exception of oil and gas leasing or development. Although the area would remain open to oil and gas leasing, any potential for lease income would be reduced below the already low value that currently exists. The added costs of directional drilling would reduce whatever minor potential currently exists for such activity. The real cost to the American public is likely to be minimal, as no drilling has ever occurred in the SRMA area, and no leasing of oil and gas has occurred in the past 6 years.

Management Prescription #4 (Land/Mineral Withdrawal): This proposed management prescription would have minimal impact on locatable minerals. The area would be closed to mining claims under the 1872 Mining Law. Any mining claim work that would have occurred, and any potential mineral discoveries would be foregone, but none are likely or anticipated. Although there has been some mining work in the past, no valuable minerals have ever been discovered or produced from the area. Where mineralization was found it was abandoned after just a few years of exploration or prospecting. Gold and copper values are so low that no mining claim work has occurred in the area in over 35 years for gold, and for over 50 years for copper, even at or adjacent to the previous mining claim areas.

## HYDROLOGY AND WATER RIGHTS

### Affected Environment:

The RMP contains additional water resource information that may not be covered in the Wetlands and Water Quality sections of this document. The BLM holds several very small water rights on the Colorado River. Although these water rights have a 1880 priority date and include recreation uses, their quantity limits their usefulness to the BLM's recreation management. The BLM also holds very small water rights on numerous tributaries within the SRMA, for various uses, with priority dates of 1880-1881. During past land acquisitions, the BLM did acquire some junior water rights for larger amounts. These rights were historically irrigation rights, but their consumptive use could be transferred to instream flows, used for augmentation water to offset nonpriority diversions, or used in other ways to benefit the BLM management. Changes in use would be according to State laws and could not impact other users. The vast majority of the water rights in the basin are used to meet or offset the front range's water demand. Future diversions are expected to greatly increase as growing populations increase the need for water on the east slope. The Northwest Colorado Council of Governments is currently trying to identify how this impacts the Colorado River. Part of their effort is to try to lessen the large impacts to the recreation industry as rafting flows are greatly reduced.

#### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1 (Boundary Adjustment): The expansion of the SRMA boundary would not directly affect water resources (see wetlands and water quality sections) or water rights. Future changes in streamflows due to water right issues, however, could alter the amount of use within the SRMA, or change the focus to fishing or upland recreation.

Management Prescription #2 (Identifying Land Use Priorities): Identifying most of the SRMA with a recreation land use priority could help determine future uses for acquired water rights. The different land use priorities within the proposed SRMA, would require that water use be considered on a case by case basis.

Management Prescription #3 and #4 (NSO for Oil and Gas Leasing, Land/Mineral Withdrawal): The oil and gas leasing NSO stipulation and closing the SRMA to mining would not impact water rights. Hydrologic impacts are discussed in soils, water quality, wetlands section of this document.

#### LAND STATUS/REALTY AUTHORIZATIONS

##### Affected Environment:

The Federal lands within the existing SRMA are available for most realty type authorizations, and numerous rights-of-way are located there. The lands are also currently open to the public land laws and mining laws. Management direction for the SRMA is provided through the SRMA Management Plan and the RMP.

##### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1 (Boundary Adjustment): Expansion of the SRMA boundary would not affect the realty use authorization program.

Management Prescription #2 (Identifying Land Use Priorities): The proposed action would identify the majority of the SRMA as a recreation priority. The recreation priority provides for realty actions, similar to preexisting land use priorities. No impacts to the realty program would occur as a result of the changed priorities.

Management Prescription #3 (NSO for Oil and Gas Leasing): This proposed management prescription would not affect the lands and realty program.

Management Prescription #4 (Land/Mineral Withdrawal): The proposed withdrawal would remove the public lands and federal mineral estate, within the proposed SRMA, from the operation of the land and mineral laws for a period of 50 years. The BLM would not be able to dispose of public lands within the withdrawal area.

#### RANGE MANAGEMENT:

##### Affected Environment:

See Vegetation section.

#### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1 (Boundary Adjustment): Modifying the SRMA boundary would have no impact on the rangeland resource.

Management Prescription #2 (Identifying Land Use Priorities): The proposed action would identify the majority of the SRMA as a recreation priority. The proposed action would additionally establish or retain a water, soil, wildlife, protected, or no priority for some lands within the SRMA. If expanding the recreation priority results in increased river access points, dispersed camping, or development of access and parking areas for fishing, it may detrimentally impact vegetative health. There is the potential that changing the Yarmony Common, Mayhoffer, and East Cedar Ridge allotments from a livestock priority to a recreation priority could impact livestock grazing activities if future management actions introduce, enhance, encourage, or increase recreation use within livestock grazing allotments. By adhering to the RMP, which provides for intensive or limited management of livestock in recreation priority areas, the priority change is not expected to impact range management.

Management Prescriptions #3 and #4 (NSO for Oil and Gas Leasing, Land/Mineral Withdrawal): These proposed management prescriptions would lessen surface disturbance as well as conflicts with livestock grazing activities associated with gas and oil development, mining activity, and land disposals.

#### RECREATION

##### Affected Environment:

Existing recreational uses in and along the river corridor include: non-motorized boating (including rafts, dories, kayaks, canoes, etc.), fishing, wildlife viewing, hunting, hiking, camping, mountain biking, and driving for pleasure. The Colorado River, within the SRMA, from the BLM's Pumphouse Recreation Area to State Bridge is a very popular boating and fishing segment. About seventy commercial companies are permitted to operate guided boating and fishing trips in the area with over 42,000 commercial visits. Public use of the segment for boating and fishing is also high with over 7,000 visits.

The presence of the railroad parallel to the river throughout the SRMA limits the opportunities for primitive recreation activities and the SRMA would be predominantly classified in the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) as :

Semi-Primitive, Motorized: Moderate probability of experiencing solitude, a closeness to nature, predominantly natural appearing environment, management alterations small in size and dispersed, travel on routes primarily by 4-wheel drive and OHVs, mostly primitive roads, and generally more than 1/2 mile from better than primitive roads.

Some of the corridor, especially where the Trough Road (Scenic Byway) is parallel to and visible from the river and at the developed BLM and private sites, would be classified as:

Roaded Natural: Moderate probability of contacts with others, mostly natural setting, management alterations (vegetative treatments, structures, etc.) are noticeable, travel is by conventional motorized vehicles (may include sedans, trailers and RVs), better than 'primitive' roads with some designed roads.

Some motorized recreation use occurs in the area immediately adjacent to the river but is limited due to the lack of suitable vehicle routes and the topography of the canyons. The upland areas receive higher levels of motorized use, especially during the fall hunting seasons. There are several old two track roads that provide motorized access to some river sites.

The majority of the project area is currently classified as 'Open' in the Off-Highway Vehicle plan adopted in 1988. Several of the primitive roads in the area have seasonal limitations to restrict access during the spring when the road surfaces are soft. Some of the routes had 'deferred' limitations for seasonal closures during the summer boating season, until such time as the use levels or conflicts between users increased. Two of these routes, one to the hot springs area and the other to the Benches area, have been closed seasonally during the boating season for the past several years after the conflicts between motorized vehicle users and river users reached unacceptable levels. These closures have greatly reduced the conflicts, but some motorized use occasionally occurs on both routes during the closure period.

#### Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1 (Boundary Adjustment): The boundary adjustment is an administrative action that would not directly affect the recreation activities. The boundary would be expanded to include lands important to the river recreation experience.

Management Prescription #2 (Identifying Land Use Priorities): Identifying the majority of the proposed SRMA with a recreation land use priority would help BLM to emphasize the recreation uses and needs along the river corridor into the future. As described in the RMP, a recreation priority is generally compatible with other resource uses, including mineral development, livestock grazing (Although grazing may be excluded on a site specific basis from developed or intensively used recreation sites.), soils objectives, watershed goals, water quality, wildlife (The priority requires protection of Critical wildlife habitat, including T&E species habitat.), cultural resources, and major realty actions. Excluded uses in a recreation priority include new mineral material sales, wilderness, and community expansion. The recreation priority would provide management direction for the recreational values in the SRMA in conjunction with the various other resources in the SRMA and the language of the RMP.

Management Prescription #3 (NSO for Oil and Gas Leasing): This prescription would be a benefit to virtually all recreation activities in the SRMA as there would be no ground disturbance associated with oil and gas development.

#### Management Prescription #4 (Land/Mineral Withdrawal):

This prescription would be a benefit to virtually all recreation activities in the SRMA as there would be no ground disturbance or dredging activities along the river associated with mining activity. Precluding mining activity would help protect the monetary investment the BLM has in recreational development along the river corridor.

## VISUAL RESOURCES

#### Affected Environment:

The project area is classified in the Visual Resource Inventory completed in 1980 as:

- Scenic Quality: A = Most Scenic
- Sensitivity Level: H = High
- Distance Zone: FG/MG = Foreground/Middle-ground

The river corridor is within a Class II visual resource management area:

- The objective of this class is to retain the existing character of the landscape.
- Changes in any of the basic visual elements of line, form, color and texture caused by management activity should repeat the natural features of the landscape.
- A contrast may be seen but should not attract attention.

The visual resource is an important component of the river recreation experience. Adverse impacts to the visual resource could reduce the quality of the recreation experience. Any facility development proposals would be reviewed for impacts to the visual resource during the project environmental assessment.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

Management Prescription #1 (Boundary Adjustment): The boundary expansion would have no effect on the visual resource since no physical changes in any resource would occur.

Management Prescription #2 (Identifying Land Use Priorities): The proposed changes to the land use priorities would have minimal affect on the visual resource since no physical changes in resources would occur. Any future resource management activity or development would be reviewed for its impacts on the visual resource and adequate mitigation would be developed to maintain or protect the visual resource.

Management Prescription #3 (NSO for Oil and Gas Leasing): The enlargement of the NSO area would limit any future oil and gas development in the proposed SRMA. Any areas visible from the river corridor that are included in the NSO area would be protected from any future developments that may detract from the current visual quality. Development could still occur on areas of private land with private minerals since they are unaffected by the NSO stipulations, and these developments could negatively affect the visual quality.

Management Prescription #4 (Land/Mineral Withdrawal): The withdrawal of the area from mineral entry would protect the visual resource from negative effects of mining activity for a period of 50 years.

## CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

**PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED:** The Notice of Intent for the proposed withdrawal and resource management plan amendment/EA was published in the Federal Register and local newspapers in August, 1999. Very minimal comment was received. The comments were considered during preparation of this environmental analysis. Additional opportunities will be provided for public input with publication of the Notice of Availability and through the Governor's Consistency Review. Any additional comments received will be considered during

preparation of the decision document for the RMP amendment. In addition, a public meeting will be held to solicit input on the proposed mineral withdrawal associated with this action.

**BLM INTERNAL COORDINATION:** The following individuals participated in the preparation of this document:

**Kremmling Field Office:**

Linda M. Gross, Field Manager  
Jim Perry, Natural Resource Specialist  
Paula Belcher, Hydrologist  
Frank Rupp, Archaeologist  
Chuck Cesar, Wildlife Biologist  
Erik Taylor, Range Conservationist  
Richard Rosene, Outdoor Recreation Planner  
John Morrone, Geologist  
Steve McCallie, Forester  
Madeline Dzielak, Realty Specialist

**Northwest Center:**

David Atkins, Resource Advisor

**ATTACHMENTS:**


Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA)  
1985 Kremmling RMP Land Use Plan Map  
(Depicts Existing Situation)

Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA)  
Land Use Plan Amendment Map, dated February 2, 2000  
(Depicts Proposed Action)

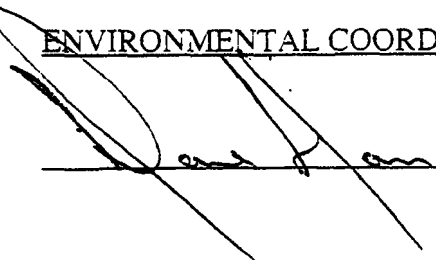
FONSI

Based on the analysis of environmental impacts contained in the attached Environmental Assessment, I have determined that the impacts are not considered to be significant and result in a finding of no significant impact on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action. The preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

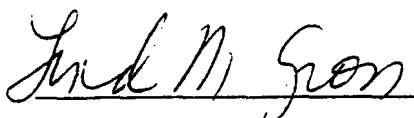
PRINCIPAL AUTHOR:

 Date: 3/24/00

ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR:

 Date: 3/24/00

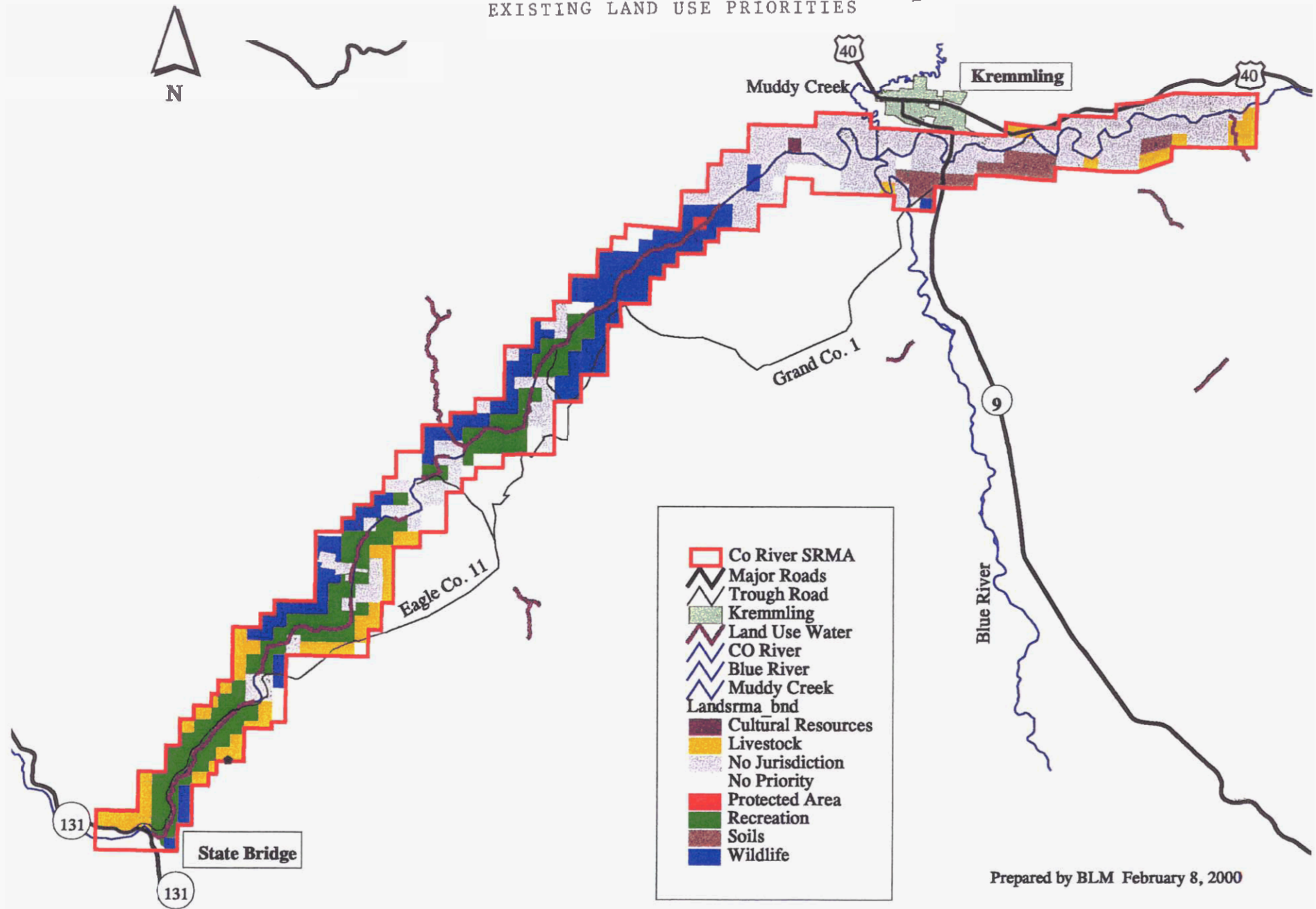
SIGNATURE OF FIELD OFFICE MANAGER:

 Date: 3/24/2000

# Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA)

## 1985 Kremmling RMP Land Use Plan Map

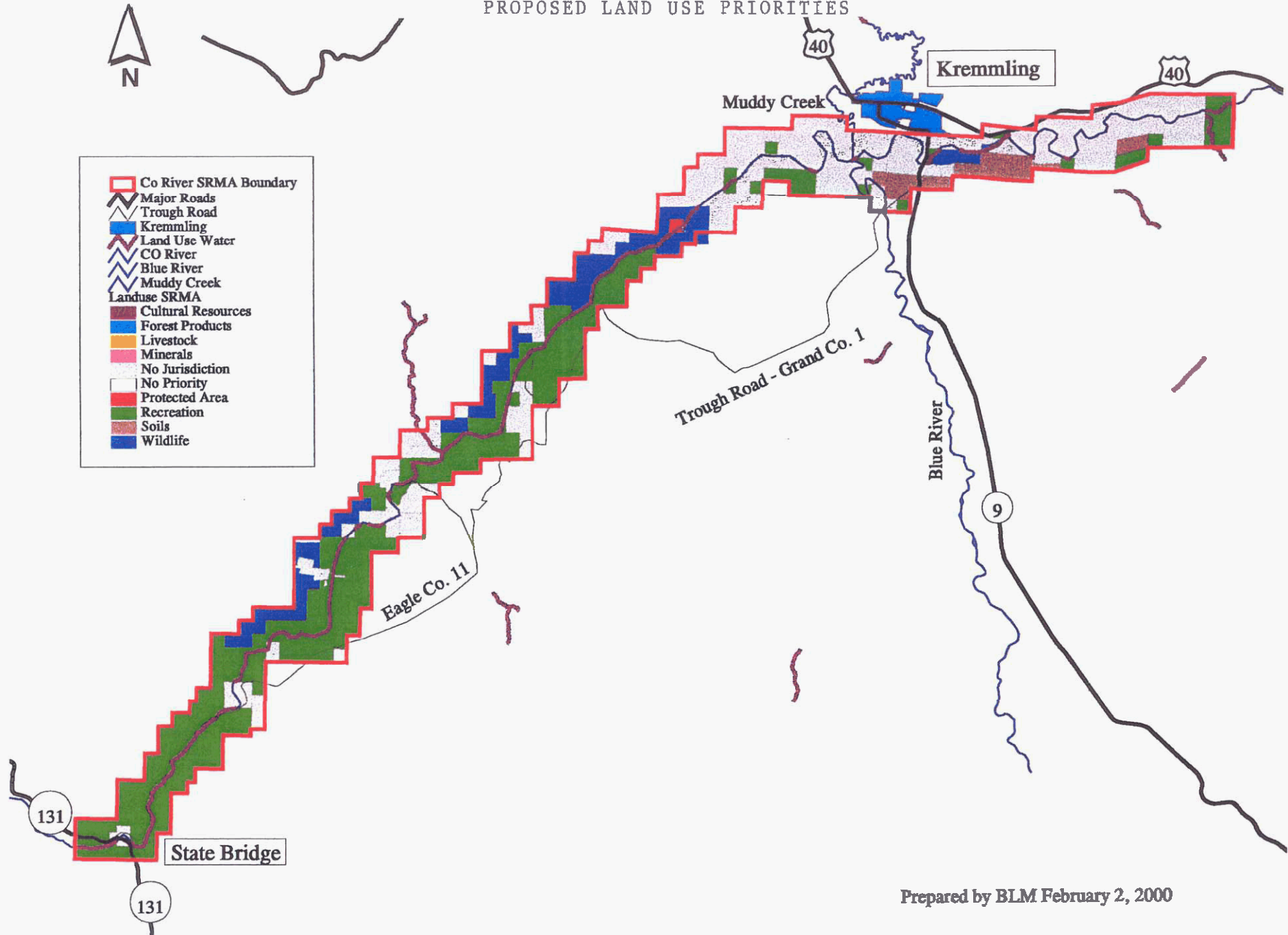
EXISTING LAND USE PRIORITIES





# Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) Land Use Plan Amendment Map

PROPOSED LAND USE PRIORITIES



Prepared by BLM February 2, 2000

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
Bureau of Land Management  
Kremmling Field Office**

**Decision Record  
and  
Resource Management Plan  
Amendment**

**Upper Colorado River  
Special Recreation Management Area**

**June 2000**

Prepared by the  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Kremmling Field Office  
Kremmling, Colorado

## **Decision Record**

### **Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area**

The purpose of this Decision Record is to document both the completion of the environmental review and the approval of an amendment to the Kremmling Resource Management Plan (RMP).

#### **DECISION**

It is my decision to select the proposed action as analyzed and described in Environmental Assessment Record CO-KRFO-00-02, dated March 24, 2000, titled "Kremmling Resource Management Plan Amendment - Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area". This decision amends the Kremmling Resource Management Plan as described in the attached Plan Amendment. The management changes include the following:

**#1.** The Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), within the Kremmling Field Office boundary, is expanded to approximately ½ mile each side of the Colorado river and is extended approximately 7 ½ miles upstream to near Reeder Creek.

**#2.** Land use priorities are changed for some public lands in the proposed SRMA. Of the 12,237 acres of public land in the SRMA, approximately 8,787 acres are identified as a recreation priority, 2,542 acres as a wildlife priority, 833 acres as a soil priority, 35 acres as a protected area priority, and 40 acres with no priority. In addition, 20.8 miles of the Colorado River and associated tributaries are designated as a water priority. The land use priority definitions, including compatible and excluded uses, are identified in the 1984 RMP.

**#3.** The existing No Surface Occupancy (NSO) area for oil and gas development within the river corridor, is expanded to that of the new SRMA boundary. The amendment ensures that any future lands within the SRMA that are acquired by the Federal government will have an NSO stipulation for oil and gas development. There is no affect on these lands unless acquired by the Federal government.

**#4.** The amendment identifies the entire 12,237 acres of Federal surface estate within the SRMA to be withdrawn from settlement, sale, location, or entry under the general land laws, including the mining laws. It also identifies 1,020 acres of private or state land with Federal minerals to be withdrawn. The amendment also identifies additional private or State owned lands within the SRMA to be withdrawn if the lands are ever acquired by the Federal government. By including these private lands at this time, they will automatically be withdrawn if acquired by the

Federal Government. There is no affect on the private lands unless they were acquired by the Federal Government.

## **RATIONALE**

The Upper Colorado River area has experienced increasing public use since the Kremmling RMP was completed in 1984, and the area of recreational use has expanded to include additional public lands. The resource values in the river corridor include important riparian, ecological, cultural, paleontological, and historic values; including National Register eligible properties. The Colorado River Headwaters Scenic Byway runs along portions of the river corridor following US Highway 40 and the Trough Road (Grand County Road #1 and Eagle County Road #11), and the river is one of the most highly utilized recreational float boating rivers in Colorado. The area also contains critical deer and elk winter range. The RMP Amendment protects these important resource and recreation values along this segment of the Colorado River. In addition, private lands have been acquired in the river corridor and this action places these lands under the umbrella of the RMP. The proposed amendment expands the SRMA to include all the lands experiencing the increasing public use and provides management direction for all the BLM administered public lands in the area.

As a result of the increased use in the area, the BLM has invested significant dollars, time, and labor in the construction and maintenance of numerous recreational facilities in the river corridor. The amendment protects these improvements from potential loss or disturbance from mining or oil and gas actions. Protection of these expenditures is necessary not only from an economic point of view, but also to ensure the recreational and scenic integrity of the river user's experience.

## **MONITORING**

This RMP Amendment will be monitored in accordance with the monitoring plan for the current RMP.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

The views of the public have been sought throughout the planning and decision making process. The Notice of Intent for the Resource Management Plan Amendment/EA was published in the Federal Register and local newspapers in August, 1999. In addition, approximately 140 letters announcing the initiation of the planning amendments were mailed to adjoining landowners, affected interest groups, and various governmental agencies. Very few comments were received and they were considered during preparation of the environmental analysis. The Notice of

Availability for the Resource Management Plan Amendment/EA was published in the Federal Register and local newspapers in March, 2000, and was also mailed to all individuals or entities that had previously commented on the proposal. A public meeting to solicit comment on the proposed withdrawal was held in Kremmling on April 13, 2000. Notification of the meeting was made available through local newspapers and the Federal Register. No comments were received as a result of the Notice of Availability or public meeting.

#### **CONSISTENCY**

This plan is consistent with the plans, programs, and policies of other Federal agencies and of State and local governments.

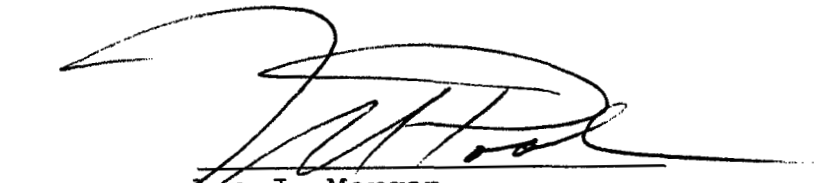
#### **AVAILABILITY OF THIS DOCUMENT**

Additional copies of the RMP Amendment are available on request at the Kremmling Field Office, 1116 Park Avenue, P.O. Box 68, Kremmling, Colorado 80459, 970-724-3437.

Recommended: 5/31/00  
Date

  
Linda M. Gross  
Kremmling Field Manager

Approved: 6/8/2000  
Date

  
Ann J. Morgan  
State Director

# **Resource Management Plan Amendment**

## **Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This RMP Amendment modifies the boundary and changes the management prescriptions for the Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area.

### **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DECISIONS**

**#1.** The Upper Colorado River Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA), within the Kremmling Field Office boundary, is expanded to approximately ½ mile each side of the Colorado river, and extended approximately 7 ½ miles upstream to near Reeder Creek, as reflected on the maps attached to Environmental Assessment Record CO-KRFO-00-02.

**#2.** Land use priorities are changed for some public lands in the proposed SRMA. Of the 12,237 acres of public land in the SRMA, approximately 8,787 acres are identified as a recreation priority, 2,542 acres as a wildlife priority, 833 acres as a soil priority, 35 acres as a protected area priority, and 40 acres with no priority. In addition, 20.8 miles of the Colorado River and associated tributaries are designated as a water priority. The affected areas are depicted on the maps attached to Environmental Assessment Record CO-KRFO-00-02.

**#3.** The existing No Surface Occupancy (NSO) area for oil and gas development within the river corridor, is expanded to that of the new SRMA boundary. The amendment also ensures that any future lands within the SRMA that are acquired by the Federal government will have an NSO stipulation for oil and gas development. There is no affect on these lands unless acquired by the Federal government.

**#4.** The amendment identifies the entire 12,237 acres of Federal surface estate within the SRMA to be withdrawn from settlement, sale, location, or entry under the general land laws, including the mining laws. It also identifies 1,020 acres of private or state land with Federal minerals to be withdrawn. The amendment also identifies additional private or State owned lands within the SRMA to be withdrawn if the lands are ever acquired by the Federal government. By including these private lands at this time, they will automatically be withdrawn if acquired by the Federal Government. There is no affect on the private lands unless they were acquired by the Federal Government. The legal

descriptions for these lands is depicted in Environmental Assessment Record CO-KRFO-00-02.

#### **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND MAINTENANCE**

With the exception of the withdrawal, this RMP Amendment will be implemented upon approval by the Colorado State Director. The final decision on the withdrawal rests with the Secretary of the Interior, and following signature of the Decision for this plan amendment, the public land order to withdraw the lands will be forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior for final consideration. Upon approval by the Secretary, the withdrawal will be implemented.

Monitoring and maintenance actions for the RMP Amendment decisions will be accomplished in accordance with procedures identified in the existing RMP.